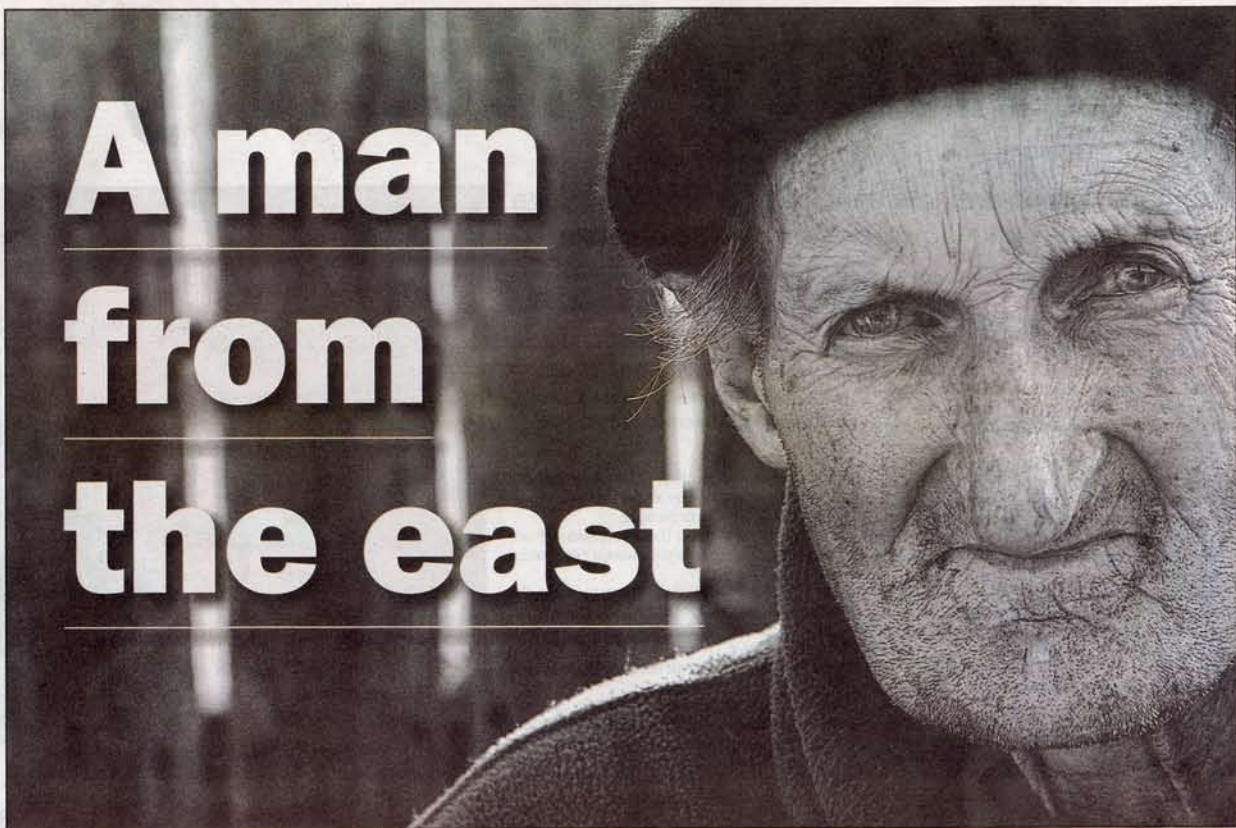


SUNDAY EXTRA

A man from the east

The death of old timer and bushman Ted Castle has severed a vital link to a pioneering past, writes **Jennifer Crawley**



A GENTLEMAN and something of an East Coast legend died last year. Theodore (Ted) Castle passed away on Wednesday, October 1, two months shy of his 81st birthday.

Sunday Tasmanian photographer Sam Rosewarne came to know the elderly man in the last few months of his life and, with his permission, took these photos as a reminder of times past.

Ted lived for 60 years in a ramshackle old house in the tiny village of Cranbrook.

Ted's house became a drawcard for tourists and locals alike.

The front veranda is supported by narrow tree trunks that are painted pale green to match the front of the house, while the back remains unpainted.

Neighbour George Whatley, who knew Ted for 50 years, said the back timbers remained bare because "Ted's father couldn't see any reason to paint them".

Ted was the seventh of 11 children born to Frank and Laura Castle. They were born in a small cottage on a property called The Grange between Cranbrook and Swansea.

Ted moved to the Cranbrook house with his parents, looking after them until their deaths.

Electricity was connected to the house, but Ted rarely used it.

"He had no conveniences, no electric appliances, only a dish to wash up in," Mr Whatley said. "He used a bucket and a stick to wash his clothes. He used to pound away, stomping up and down on the veranda."

Ted had two toilets. The one for visitors had a box of tissues and old carpet on the seat. His own toilet had sheets of newspaper.

Ted was a familiar sight on his pushbike when he made his weekly trip down the highway to Swansea for shopping and a few beers.

In his later years, Ted was hit by a car on one of his bike trips.



COSY: Ted Castle enjoys the warmth of the fire in his Cranbrook home.

Pictures: SAM ROSEWARNE

"He had no conveniences, no electric appliances, only a dish to wash up in"



SIMPLE LIFE: Ted collects firewood, left, and his modified shears designed not to scare the sheep.

"It was a terrible accident," Ted's sister Maude Gamble, 90, of Brighton, said. "A car went into the back of him and belted up his bike."

Ted broke some ribs which, said Maude, were never properly set.

Ted always kept a couple of sheep in his back yard. He killed all his meat and cut his own firewood.

"Just the things he used to do,

collect bark and sticks, poor old fella, kill his own meat, always on his own after his father died," Mr Whatley said.

Ted worked much of his life at a property called Brook Lodge, where he did ploughing, shearing and later on worked as a rouseabout.

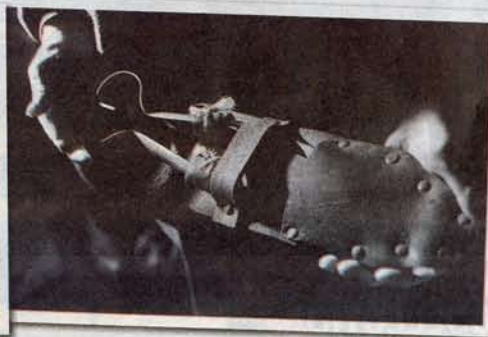
He kept a special set of hand shears with pieces of leather wrapped around the blades to blunt

the noise and not scare the sheep.

"He was a great one," Maude said. "He would have everything ready in the shed for the fellows to start in the morning."

Maude said that Ted had one unrequited love in his life and never courted another woman.

Ted cared for an invalid neighbour who was confined to a wheelchair. Every night Ted would make



the trip to his neighbour's house to put him to bed.

Longtime friend and neighbour Jack Barber, 86, described Ted as "a quiet old fella".

"Ted was never a nuisance," Jack said. "He loved a drop of drink, he'd go down to the beach and sleep it off, he'd never hurt anyone."

Ted twice spent time in hospital towards the end of his life and died in the Swansea May Shaw Hospital.

Three weeks before his death, Maude visited her brother in hospital.

A nurse came into his room with decorative feathers in her hair.

"How do you think I look?" she asked Ted.

"Gosh, you want to be careful," he said. "They might take you for a rooster and chop your head off."

THEODORE GILBERT CASTLE
Born: December 8, 1927
Died: October 1, 2008